

*Featured in this issue is the article taken from a newspaper in Hong Kong concerning the increasingly leading role being played by the 'written' form of Cantonese in advertising, etc. This article was provided by Dave Kitching some time ago but lack of space precluded its inclusion in edition No.9 of the newsletter.*

*Thanks as always to those of you who have written in with contributions. We repeat it frequently, but it remains true that without your input, we have no newsletter. Thank you too for letting us know if you change your address; if you move frequently (as is the case with service personnel) please include this newsletter on the list of those to inform when you do change address. Only a very small number of newsletters are returned to us each issue marked 'gone away' or 'not at this address'; sometimes none are returned. We clearly would like to keep these returns at a minimum level.*

*We welcome two new members with this issue; these are Michael Aichholzer and Nicholas WESTGARTH. Thank you to those of you who managed to find them.*



## NEWS OF MEMBERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

**Michael AICHHOLZER** [Mandarin mid 80s] has joined us from Hawaii where he is serving as a Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Australian Navy on a 3-year exchange posting with the United States Navy. After graduating from CLS in 1984, Michael returned to Hong Kong in 1992, working at Headquarters British Forces in the then Prince of Wales' Barracks until 1995. In 1997 he acted as the Commanding Officer's interpreter for the visit of HMAS Perth to Qingdao; this was followed by a similar duty when the PLA Navy made a reciprocal visit to Sydney in 1998. He says that he owes it to the quality of instruction he received during his time at CLS which enabled him to accomplish his interpreting duties successfully. His e-mail address is [michael\\_aichholzer@yahoo.com](mailto:michael_aichholzer@yahoo.com) and he also has a website at [www.come.to/silver-mongo](http://www.come.to/silver-mongo).

**John BORDWELL** [FAO mid 80s] has written from Hawaii, where he is now into the final year of his tour of duty. We thank him for putting us in touch with Michael AICHHOLZER.

**Brian BUNKER** [Mandarin late 80s] has moved to a new address but is still living and working in Hong Kong.

**Mrs. CHENG Ya Lan [Mrs. Zhong]** [Staff] worked closely with the Shanxi Province Dance Team during a cultural visit to Rexburg, Idaho, for the 15th Annual International Folk Dance Festival. She is pictured with two admirers, who were drummers with the team.



This has been a very hot summer in Idaho, and Mrs. Zhong has enjoyed walks in the cool of the early morning at the Horticultural Research Demonstration Garden at Rick's College, where she works. Pictured below is Mrs. Zhong in the gardens.



**Jim CHILTON** [FAO mid 80s] is still working at the Missouri State Child Support Enforcement Unit, but has had increasing success with his portrait painting, exhibiting at several national-level shows each year. Check out Jim's website at <http://www.portraitartist.com/chilton> for the details.

**Steve COHEN** [FAO early 90s] has left the US Army and is now working in Shanghai as Vice-President responsible for China operations for the Beekman Group. While still serving, between 1996 and 1999 Steve was a key member [analyst/translator and policy advisor] of the team working to recover US servicemen killed in action during the Korean War. He would welcome contact with former staff of MODCLS; he congratulates Sara LEE [Siu] on her marriage and remembers with affection his ping-pong doubles championship partner Mrs. Lorraine POON. Steve is on e-mail at [murfcohe@aol.com](mailto:murfcohe@aol.com) or [murfcohe@yahoo.com](mailto:murfcohe@yahoo.com) and will be pleased to hear from you.

**Brian CONNOR** [Mandarin late 80s] has recently visited Shanghai and Hong Kong on business with Capital One Security Services.

**Kevin DOYLE** [Mandarin late 70s] is also working at Capital One Security Services in the United Kingdom and has recently moved house.

It is with much sadness that we record the death, from cancer, of Mike FARR [Mandarin late 60s]. Alan ROBERTSON [Mandarin late 60s and Cantonese mid 70s] visited him in hospital shortly before his death and also attended his funeral. An obituary notice for Mike appeared in The Times' newspaper in Britain and we reproduce it in full on the centre pages.

**Brian GOPSILL** [Mandarin mid 80s] has been in touch from Naples, Italy, where he is on the staff of COMNAVSOUTH at the NATO Headquarters. It was good to talk to him on the telephone.

**David GRAY** [Mandarin late 80s] is now Group Legal Advisor to Cable and Wireless HKT [formerly HK Telecom] specialising in IT and e-commerce law and living on Hong Kong island. He occasionally meets up with Nick HART [Royal Australian Navy] and Brian BUNKER [British Army] and, until he left Hong Kong, sometimes saw Kelly HICKS [US Army]. David recently took some refresher Chinese lessons and the text book used acknowledged contributions from Lisa AHNERT and Alice CHANG.

**John GRIEVE** [Mandarin early 90s] has written from the Falkland Islands where he is serving with the British Army. He has spent some time in hospital lately recovering from an operation. John hopes to return to UK next year, to begin what is likely to be his final two years of service. His e-mail address is johngr84@hotmail.com.

**Dave KITCHING** [Cantonese late 60s and Mandarin late 80s] has been a frequent correspondent during the summer and has told the story of a trip he took through East Malaysia which rivals anything produced by Somerset Maugham in conjuring up the essence of the locality. In addition to the article on 'written' Cantonese [see elsewhere in this issue] kindly sent in by him, Dave has also provided this snippet of information from the South China Morning Post:

A link to the colonial past was broken yesterday when the PLA announced it would rename the eight barracks it took over from British forces.

The Prince of Wales Barracks will be renamed Central Barracks in line with a decision by the PLA to make the new names "easy to remember" by linking them to their locations.

The changes, which will come into effect after the necessary legislative procedures, come two years and 10 months after the PLA marched into the territory to assert mainland sovereignty.

A PLA spokesman said the names were chosen after extensive study and took note of social and media concerns.

Victoria barracks will become Justice Road Barracks; Bonham Court Barracks changes to Western Barracks; and, Osborn Barracks becomes Kowloon East Barracks.

Borneo Barracks will be renamed Sek Kong North Barracks; Malaysia Barracks, Sek Kong South Barracks; Cassino Lines, San Tin Barracks; and Tai O Navy Observatory changes to Tai O Barracks.

Prince of Wales Barracks was named after Britain's Prince Charles in 1979 when he opened the military site it stands in, known as HMS Tamar. The 4,000-strong PLA Garrison festoons the outside of the building with a light display at Lunar New Year.

**Kevin RICE** [FAO mid 80s] is leaving Beijing after three years at the US Embassy to China and from 1st December, 2000 will become Commandant at the Defense Language Institute at Monterey, California. We are delighted to hear of this appointment and we wish Kevin and Kitty every success in the new post.

**Alan ROBERTSON** [Mandarin late 60s and Cantonese mid 70s] continues to demonstrate the true CLS spirit. He visited Mike FARR in hospital shortly before his death and also represented the School at Mike's funeral in Inverness, Scotland. Alan was a member of course N3 and occupied a room in Lyemun Officers' Mess next to Mike, a member of N2, for some time. A full obituary appears on the centre pages, but Alan adds that a huge number of people attended the funeral, including RN officers, the Sea Cadets, the local postman, the mechanics who serviced his car, and many others.

**Alan SYKES** [Cantonese late 60s] has been in touch and it was good talking to him on the telephone in October. During the summer he and wife Mei enjoyed a 5-day holiday in France, staying with John PRINCE [Cantonese early 70s] and his wife Ann. Unfortunately Alan suffered another mini-stroke after his return to London but is slowly improving.

**Mr. TSE Hau Loong** [Staff] sprang immediately to mind when your unworthy editor spotted the following article in The Daily Telegraph recently. Cantonese students who received the advice to "run around the Lyemun sports field a couple of times" before oral exams will realise that much loved Mr. Tse was thirty years ahead of De Montfort University .....

# Nervous pacing can help people conquer stress

ACTORS and musicians who nervously pace up and down before an important performance are protecting themselves from stage fright, a study claimed.

Researchers found that a burst of exercise half an hour before going on stage reduced stress and anxiety.

The findings, from a study of British music students, might have implications for anyone about to face a gruelling ordeal. Business people might go for a work-out before a major presentation.

The study, at De Montfort University in Leicester, also revealed that musicians felt more confident about going on stage if they were physically fit.

The preliminary findings came from the first year of a three-year study, reported to the British Association yesterday.

Twelve students at the Royal College of Music were brought together, fitted with heart monitors and told that

one would have to perform a five minute piece of music in front of the rest of the group.

Half the students were then asked to prepare by watching a video of a music masterclass while the others went for a brisk walk in Hyde Park for 25 minutes.

After being given half an hour to recover from the walk, one student was selected to perform. The same tests were repeated after students were put through a six-week cardiovascular fitness regime.

Prof Adrian Taylor, who led the research, said the study was designed to mimic pre-performance nerves.

Six weeks of exercise significantly reduced anxiety among the group and those musicians who exercised just before a simulated performance were less nervous than those who watched a video.

"We found that those people who were fitter tended to react with a

smaller increase in heart rate," he said.

A second study found that musicians improved their performance by harnessing the power of their brain waves.

Prof John Gruzelier, of Imperial College Medical School in London, taught students to control the frequency of electrical signals from a brain region known as the sensory motor cortex.

Past studies have suggested that certain frequencies — around 14 cycles per second — appear to enhance a musician's performances.

Students were trained on a device that converted patterns of brain behaviour into a picture of a sailing boat on a computer screen. If the students were able to control their brain rhythms, the boat moved forward.

Musicians who trained on the device did better on a range of psychological tests of attention. Their performances in a concert scenario also improved significantly.

**Nicholas WESTGARTH** [Cantonese mid 80s] has joined us from the British Embassy in Beijing, where he has been Counsellor [Public Affairs] since 1999. After leaving CLS Nicholas spent some time at the Diplomatic Service Language School in London, and some time in Taiwan, learning Mandarin. He learnt of this newsletter from Neal SEALOCK [FAO mid 80s] who is at the US Embassy in Beijing. Nicholas can be contacted by e-mail at [Nicholas.Westgarth@peking.mail.fco.gov.uk](mailto:Nicholas.Westgarth@peking.mail.fco.gov.uk) if you would like to contact him.

**Mr. James WONG Kwok Wei** [Staff] has been in touch on a number of occasions from Los Angeles and your unworthy editor wishes to place on record his grateful thanks for the expert help James has again provided in the translation of technically difficult pieces of Chinese.

**Chris WOOD** [FCO mid 80s] has moved house but is still living in London. He can be contacted on e-mail at [C.T.Wood@btinternet.com](mailto:C.T.Wood@btinternet.com) if you have this facility.







H O N G  K O N G



# COMMANDER MICHAEL FARR

LIKE Gordon of Khartoum, Mike "Chinese" Farr earned his sobriquet by a devotion to Chinese affairs and, in his case, comparatively long service in China as the naval attaché to the British Embassy in Beijing. He was, unusually, appointed for two tours, the first under Sir Percy Cradock from 1981 to 1983, and the second, under Sir Alan Donald, from August 1986 to August 1990 — which encompassed Deng Xiaoping's ruthless suppression of the student uprising in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Farr was the first naval attaché to be appointed since the withdrawal of diplomatic presence coincident with the celebrated escape down the Yangtze River of the badly damaged frigate *Amethyst* 1949, her replacement captain, Lieutenant Commander Kerans, having been the assistant naval attaché at Nanking.

Farr's first tour was marked by less easy diplomatic relations than his second, but his remarkable personality and excellent grasp of Mandarin Chinese enabled him to build unusually warm and fruitful relationships with officers of the Chinese Navy, who knew him as a friend and valued his advice as a professional submariner of distinction. He was permitted to attend seminars and deliver lectures on submarine operations at the submarine school at Qingdao.

obituaries@the-times.co.uk

His influence was never more evident than during the fraught days after the slaughter in Tiananmen Square. Infringements of diplomatic immunity, including armed threats to the international diplomatic enclave, proved excessively alarming for the inmates and their wives and children.

As the senior British military representative present at the time, Farr produced an evacuation plan for dependents which was widely used by other embassies. Landing clearance for a British Airways aircraft proved impossible to obtain. A telephone call from a Chinese Air Force contact was taken at the Farrs' flat by his wife Pat, herself an excellent Mandarin speaker. She recalls that when she heard that clearance had been arranged, she thanked the caller for his help and received the reply: "We are friends and always will be." Later it emerged that Special Forces from the People's Liberation Army had kept a particular watch on the Farrs' flat to see that they came to no harm.

Sir Alan Donald remembers Farr as "a shining example of compassion and common sense". As well as having two children of their own, the Farrs adopted a four-year-old boy from a home in Hong Kong, and a handicapped girl from an orphanage in Beijing when she was still in a cot. Because of his friendships, Farr was able to reduce

## Attaché whose relations with the Chinese survived Tiananmen Square

months of adoption bureaucracy to 24 hours. He was the first Westerner to be allowed such an adoption. The Farris' 14th-floor flat was also home to cats, rabbits, ducks, cage birds, terrapins and a white mouse.

International relations were strained after the shootings in Tiananmen Square, but it was a mark of the mutual respect between Farr and the Chinese Navy that they were talking together within a few weeks. He was appointed OBE for his services in China.

Educated initially at Watford Grammar school, Michael Farr was awarded a bursary to Eton in 1952 and went to Dartmouth in 1957. In 1961 he trained as a submariner and he then served in several submarines on the Home and Far East stations, notably during the confrontation with Indonesia between 1963 and 1965.

His Chinese language course in Hong Kong lasted from 1967 to 1970, but Farr's career as an able and active submariner dictated that this was not to be used professionally for ten years. He qualified as a submarine captain in 1971 and commanded *Finwhale* and *Porpoise* out of Singapore before serving in the personnel division of the Admiralty.

A belief that one had to be married to get a place at the United States Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, had the happy effect

of accelerating his wedding to Pat in 1975.

On return to Britain, he qualified for service in nuclear submarines. After duty in Scotland with the Third Submarine Squadron, he commanded the Polaris ballistic missile submarine *Revenge* for two years, ensuring the continuing integrity of Britain's nuclear deterrent throughout a series of ten-week patrols.

His final tour before retirement was to superintend the secret Underwater Test and Evaluation Centre in the Inner Sound of Raasay in the Hebrides, where naval underwater weapons and sonars are developed.

Michael Farr was well known as a lively raconteur and wit, with "a heart as big as all outdoors" as a contemporary described him. When in Hong Kong he ran the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme for street kids and in Beijing was deputy chairman on the board of the International School. In Scotland he chaired the local Sea Cadets unit, was a governor of Fortrose Academy and secretary of the Kyle Playing Fields Association.

He is survived by his wife and their four children.

**Commander Michael Farr, OBE, British Naval Attaché, Beijing, 1981-83, and 1986-90, was born on October 16, 1939. He died of prostate cancer on September 22 aged 60.**

**Brash language  
that's heard  
and now seen**



# Cantonese, once regarded as a low-brow, inferior spoken dialect, is elbowing its way into print

Clarence Tsui

IMAGINE a Cantonese version of Austin Powers - the special agent from the flower-power "Swinging Sixties" era - suddenly appearing on Hong Kong's streets.

Even as a Cantonese-speaker, language would be among the many cultural shocks awaiting him.

A decline in educational standards and the corruption of spoken Cantonese by the introduction of a mixture of English and Chinese colloquialisms would see him occasionally stumped in conversation. But it is the written word, in newspapers, on signs and advertising hoardings, which would leave our 60s visitor most mystified.

He might understand individual characters, but, when strung together these form sentences that would make no sense to him. They did not exist in his heyday. Because, more than three decades on, Cantonese - the language once heard but not seen - has elevated itself into print. And, despite a prevailing disdain for this new written form and the worst predictions of the demise of Cantonese in general after 1997, the language appears to have become stronger than ever.

Even a Chinese person who speaks and reads Putonghua might feel like a foreigner in Hong Kong in this new century. The chasm between spoken and written Chinese - Cantonese and Putonghua, basically - has not been wider. Take as an example the Chinese title for *All About My Mother*; Pedro Almodovar's new film which appears in our drawing. The current translation is \_\_\_\_\_, a totally Cantonese take on the original. If the film had hit these shores decades ago, the name would have been \_\_\_\_\_.

This is easier to scale, since it involves characters already existing in the Chinese word bank. However, there are some expressions that call for the imagination because of the lack of a ready-made written equivalent: the expression *SSittl* (he's agitated) - a commonplace phrase in Hong Kong, no doubt - involves two characters that some creative pcn-wjelding person made up years ago and which have caught on.

Hong Kong, according to some, was not meant to see in the 21st century this way. Some Western sinologists said Cantonese would be swamped by Putonghua - the lingua franca of the vast majority of the mainland's billion-plus people - after Beijing reclaimed its prodigal me-

tropolis from Britain in 1997. But instead of fading into oblivion, the distinctive local language has become more and more established, with the introduction and increasing use of its printed version, seen in everything from mass-circulation, gossip-mongering tabloids to solemn public service propaganda.

Pop music is also increasingly being written with Cantonese verbal twists, even in ballads meant to radiate melancholy and elegance.

If the state of a city's popular culture is an indication of its vibrancy, then with Cantonese dictating the linguistic feel of the place, in both written and spoken forms, it must mean Hong Kong, as distinct from the mainland, is alive and bickering.

Its proliferation in advertising strongly suggests a reflection of public preference for the local dialect. Indeed, Cantonese usage on billboards and in newspaper ads has increased significantly. No more is it seen, as it once was, as a rural strain that copywriters avoid because of supposedly low-class connotations.

Tsang Kam-ching, executive creative director at local advertising agency BBDO Hong Kong, and a part-time lecturer in advertising theory at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, has had a hand in some of Hong Kong's most eye-catching recent marketing campaigns. His work for mobile phone operator Sunday commands professional admiration, and the creation of brand awareness utilises this new-era Cantonese, of course.

Using Cantonese slogans in advertising campaigns is fashionable nowadays, Mr Tsang said. "The trend is to be more casual about things instead of picking at the properness of the Chinese being used. It is acceptable to be a bit on the slack side nowadays. The way that sells is for something to be unpretentious, flexible and feasible for the tastes of the audience."

Commodities for the younger generation - from mini-disc players to mobile phones - are usually marketed in slang that would have been out of place even 10 years ago, he said. Even some once-staunchly conservative banks are taking a low-brow linguistic approach to their advertising, aimed at a young market.

Mr. Tsang, however, says this trend runs the risk of dumbing down the language. "It worries me that it is getting more difficult to get copywriters who can come up with proper standard Chinese."

Educationalists agree. Many fear schoolchildren will be adversely affected by neglecting conventional Chinese.

"It would be impractical to deny the respect due to local dialects - but what worries me is how schoolchildren would only know the dialect, or even treat that as the orthodox model in language-learning," said Chan Hon-sum, director of the academic department at the Professional Teachers' Union and a Chinese teacher of long standing.

The common usage of Cantonese in newspaper reportage can frustrate teachers, he said, by blurring the line between spoken and standard written Chinese - Cantonese and Putonghua respectively, though he says he is not against seeing elements of the oral tradition move into the mainstream language.

"It is common to see the spoken form becoming part of conventional written language - but it should happen in its natural course, allowing for filtering over time. This wholesale onslaught of written Cantonese to the students is really frightening," Mr Chan said.

For Cantonese to establish itself as a fully fledged language in its own right seems more likely than its gradual disappearance. An estimated 50 million people worldwide - though mostly in Hong Kong, Macau and Guangdong province, and also including the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia, North America and Europe - speak Cantonese as their first language, conversing in it daily at work or home.

To dismiss it as simply a regional - variation of Putonghua best for spoken use would probably be a gross underestimation. Yet achieving full acceptance of **written** Cantonese still presents a major challenge.

"There are a lot of cases in which a local language is different from its national variation, but for Cantonese the situation is quite different," said Professor Luke Kang-kwong, head of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). "This is not another ordinary local language *per se*."

"A very well-established teaching tradition using Cantonese has existed for a long time, and even when teaching standard Chinese at school, Cantonese is being used as a teaching medium. Even dictionaries tell students how characters are read in Cantonese rather than in Putonghua."

A paradox, however, persists: increasing use of Cantonese, even in literary circles, is not matched with a corresponding recognition of its unique standing. The stigma once attached to it - Cantonese as the lingua franca of the uneducated masses, forever banished to a life without a written script - has fal-

tered, but there is still a feeling against its written form.

Dr Stephen Matthews, Professor Luke's colleague at [lie HKU, recalled an incident that spoke volumes about the prejudice against written Cantonese. A German friend was reading a paperback in Cantonese on the MTR. "A person tapped her on the shoulder and said: 'It's not Chinese, put it away' - as if she was reading a pornographic magazine," he said. "When I point out these books to my students they are slightly embarrassed about them; they don't want to take them too seriously."

There is strong reluctance to accept Cantonese away from conversational levels, said Dr Virginia Yip Choi-yin, associate professor in modern languages at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "A lot of people are so adamant... they

just will not give an inch. They have this very straight, rigid demarcation separating Cantonese from standard Chinese," she said. Dr Yip and Dr Matthews have, together, spent much time researching the inner depths of Cantonese, culminating in a number of books on Cantonese grammar. Although they stressed it was "none of their business" to heap prestige on Cantonese, they believed their work could make people, especially native speakers of the language, realise that governing rules exist in the language.

"We want to debunk the myth that Cantonese has no grammar. This is entertained by so many educated people - even our scientist friends and students. They were so shocked and surprised to hear that we have produced a whole book for Cantonese grammar," Dr Yip said.

"The real question is what if you write in Cantonese: is it going to be acceptable, even in academic circles? It's OK to see it in the MTR or in popular magazines, but what if you do it in a formal context? That's a hard battle to fight."

The work of local linguists, however, has surely done Cantonese a power of good in its struggle for full recognition. Professor Luke at HKU, for example, is compiling a database of more than a million Cantonese words, including commonplace terms - like *gui* (tired), *mang* (pull), *fing* (swing) and *tem* (lick) - which have no written equivalent.

Written Cantonese is here to stay, Dr Yip said. In Beijing, Cantonese phrases - like *lik-si* (taxi) or *saang-maaiig* (vigorous, as in *saang-maang hoi-sin* - fresh seafood) - have captured the imagination of many a mainlanders, she added. "Cantonese is ... going north as well."

## MEMORIES IN EARLY WINTER

South go the wild geese, for leaves are now falling,  
And the water is cold with a wind from the north.  
I remember my home; but the Hsiang River's curves  
Are walled by the clouds of this southern country.  
I go forward. I weep till my tears are spent.  
I see a sail in the far sky.  
Where is the ferry? Will somebody tell me?  
It's growing rough. It's growing dark.

*c*

## 早寒有怀

孟浩然

木落雁南渡， 北风江上寒。  
我家襄水曲， 遥隔楚云端。  
乡泪客中尽， 孤帆天际看。  
迷津欲有问， 平海夕漫漫。